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SUBJECT: TRACKING DE-BA'ATHIFICATION NUMBERS GETS TRICKY IN
FINAL DAYS BEFORE CANDIDATE LIST GOES TO PRINT

Classified By: A/DCM Gary A. Grappo, for reasons 1.4 b and d.

[11](#). (C) SUMMARY: Efforts to short-circuit the AJC process by questioning its legitimacy seem to have ground completely to a halt, as political parties have replaced some 180-200 candidates who were disqualified by the AJC and are seeking decisions on appeals. Embassy and UNAMI are pressing for an expedited review of appeals and an end, or at least suspension, of the de-Ba'athification process until after March 7. The number of disqualified candidates remains fluid, with IHEC continuing to receive updates and replacements from the political parties and the AJC, as well as additional non-de-Ba'athification-related vetting from other ministries such as the Ministry of Interior. IHEC plans to stop accepting changes the night of February 3 in order to send the "final" candidate list to the printer. Political party/coalition officials continue to walk back previous statements that (with various caveats) threatened boycotts. END SUMMARY.

KEEPING TRACK OF NUMBERS GETTING TRICKY

[12](#). (C) Keeping track of the de-Ba'athification numbers has become tricky in the past few days as the communications between IHEC have multiplied in a final flurry of corrections, names dropped by parties on their own initiative, new de-Ba'athification vetting for replacement candidates, in tandem with media accounts that sometime confuse these numbers with separate (non-de-Ba'athification) vetting by Ministries of Interior (four different levels of vetting), Defense, and Education. UNAMI's Electoral Assistance Team Leader Sandra Mitchell confirmed that political parties have replaced some 180-200 candidates who were disqualified by the AJC. IHEC Commissioner Judge Qasim al-Aboudi estimated the number to be closer to 250, in a conversation with poloffs February 1. IHEC has subsequently furnished those new names to the AJC for de-Ba'athification vetting. Media reports indicate that AJC is rejecting some of those new candidates, although in fairly small numbers.

[13](#). (C) Aboudi and Mitchell could not provide much clarity about media accounts citing 766 names that IHEC has sent back to the AJC. Mitchell explained that in addition to the replacement candidates, those names included "many" "mistakes" IHEC was reporting to the AJC. (NOTE: Press accounts February 1 reported a short list of names that IHEC reinstated as candidates after reporting cases of mistaken identity to the AJC. END NOTE.) Mitchell described the current stage of vetting as a "fluid process" with constant back and forth between IHEC, the political parties, and the AJC, in addition to the vetting from the other ministries mentioned above. She said that IHEC would close the process down the night of February 3 and send the "final" candidate list to the printer. Unlike the ballots, which have been printed in the Dubai, the candidate list will be printed locally. Mitchell said it remained "technically possible" for IHEC to print an addendum to the candidate list as late as February 20 if the Cassation Chamber renders decisions on

the appeals it has received. The ongoing multi-level vetting and replacement of candidates (by parties) will likely continue at a rapid pace until the February 3 deadline, making difficult the tracking of totals at any given moment, Mitchell indicated.

WALKING BACK THOSE BOYCOTT THREATS

¶4. (C) Political party/coalition officials continue to walk back previous statements that (with various caveats) threatened boycotts. Sons of Iraq leader (and member of Bolani's Coalition of Iraq's Unity) Abu Risha publicly disavowed February 1 comments attributed to him a day earlier threatening a boycott. Tha'ir Nageeb, Chairman of the Iyad Allawi-led Iraqiyya coalition, continued the balancing act, walking back the threat of the boycott most of the way, but leaving it out there as "a last resort."

MELKERT MEETS AMMAR AL-HAKIM

¶5. (C) SRSRG Melkert met with ISCI head Ammar al-Hakim January 31 to press for an expedited solution to the de-Ba'athification controversy. According to UNAMI political officer Wilfried Buchta Hakim voiced the need for the issue to be resolved through the legal appeals process. He was somewhat evasive or otherwise unresponsive when Melkert tried to press him to be more engaged on the issue, insisting that the controversy could only be resolved through the legal process. Melkert was quoted after the meeting saying that the actions of the AJC are an internal Iraqi issue.

EFFORTS AT POLITICAL INTERVENTION SHORT-CIRCUITED

¶6. (C) Efforts to short-circuit the AJC process by questioning its legitimacy seem to have ground completely to a halt, as letters seeking judicial opinions have gone unanswered. Speaker Samarra'i'e, echoing other Iraqi political figures over the past week, told General Odierno that he supported the ongoing appeals process as the way to resolve the controversy. He said he supported the notion of UNAMI taking a more public and aggressive stance calling for the appeals to be concluded at an early date. Embossos will see Supreme Court Chief Judge Medhat al-Mahmoud the evening of February 1 to gauge progress on the appeals (details to be reported septel).

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